

# Recent data on the distribution of birds in Guatemala

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Information on the distribution of birds in Guatemala was summarized, updated and organized comprehensively by Land (1970), who indicated clearly that further field research on the subject would be desirable. From November 1981 to May 1982, from February to November 1984, and again from February to September 1985, all months inclusive, during studies of avian frugivory and plant dispersal in Guatemala's arid interior (Wendelken & Martin in press), we accumulated substantial amounts of new information on bird distribution throughout the country. Here, we present distributional data for 42 species. For 33 of these, we list 36 records from geographical regions in which the species previously had not been reported, namely: 26 for the Motagua Valley portion of the arid interior, 5 for northern Petén, 3 for the Caribbean lowland, and one each for the departments of Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz. We also clarify existing ambiguity concerning the eastern boundary of an unusual, but important Central American avian distributional zone formalized by Land (1962a, 1963, 1970). All records are based on observations made through 8 x 50 binoculars.

We can find no treatment of avian distribution in Guatemala subsequent to that of Land (1970). Our conclusions concerning the appropriateness of our records are based mainly on comparisons with Land's (1970) species accounts and range maps, together with earlier literature, including Land's papers on birds of the Motagua Valley portion of the arid interior (1962a), the Sierra de las Minas (1962b) and the Caribbean lowland (1963); we also have searched through the subsequent literature.

Land (1962a) reported 123 species from the arid interior of eastern Guatemala, of which 75 were resident. Based primarily on records from the Motagua River Valley and the plains about Salamá (Dpto. Baja Verapaz), Land's (1962a) data also included records from near Quiriguá (Dpto. Izabal). In a subsequent report on birds of the Caribbean lowland, Land (1963) characterized Quiriguá as "humid lower Motagua Valley", and later (1970), in a map of avian distributional areas, figured Quiriguá well within his Caribbean Lowland area. In reality, this seeming contradiction represents compromise; more xeric conditions exist a short distance W of Quiriguá, and the general area is one of transition. Here, we follow Land's 1963 and 1970 treatments, and consider records from Quiriguá to be from the Caribbean lowland. Land (1970) represented the Motagua Valley portion of the arid interior as his Tropical Zone, Arid Interior Geographical (Distributional) Area, and equated it with the Tropical Very Dry Forest Life Zone of Holdridge (1967); this is the region that forms our frame of reference for comparisons with Land's (1962a) data and which we term "tropical arid interior" in the following annotated list. All our records from this region are from sites on the floor of the Motagua Valley in the departments of El Progreso and Zacapa; unless qualified in the text, each represents the first record for the species from the tropical arid interior and is annotated FRTAI. Records from other areas are noteworthy for reasons given within the appropriate species accounts.

Nomenclature and sequence follow the American Ornithologists' Union (1983) Checklist of North American Birds, 6th edition.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

### GREAT BLUE HERON *Ardea herodias*

9 March 1984, 2 seen along the Motagua River at the town Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

### GREAT EGRET *Casmerodius albus*

8 March 1984, one seen (P.W.W.) along the Motagua R. at El Manzanal, Dpto. El Progreso, and another (P.W.W.) along the Motagua at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, 4 June 1984. FRTAI.

### LITTLE BLUE HERON *Egretta caerulea*

Recorded by Land (1962a) at Quiriguá (see back). One adult and 2 immatures seen along the Motagua R. at the town Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa, 10 March 1984. P.W.W. found an immature along the Motagua R. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, 24 July 1984. FRTAI.

### CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Very common resident of the Motagua R. Valley in Dptos. El Progreso and Zacapa, March–October 1984. FRTAI.

### BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

3 seen, 2 June 1984, and 2, next day, flying above the Motagua R. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI. On 16 August 1984, 6 were seen from the bridge spanning the Río Dulce at Fronteras, Dpto. Izabal, the first records from the Caribbean lowland. Another was seen in the Caribbean lowland, 3 September 1984, at Quiriguá, Dpto. Izabal.

### BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*

Rare, possibly resident, in Guatemala; collected once in the volcanic highlands (Land 1970). P.W.W. sighted a single bird, 18 February 1984, a pair on 7 October 1984, and a pair on 11 August 1985 in the volcanic highlands, 5 km south of Antigua, Dpto. Sacatepéquez. On 10 March 1984, P.W.W. saw one individual at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI. P.W.W. found one, 9 March 1984, at Los Andes, and 2 on 3 September 1984 at Quiriguá, both Dpto. Izabal, the first records for the Caribbean lowland.

### SNAIL KITE *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

Reported as rare and from only 2 locations in Guatemala (Land 1970). P.W.W. saw an adult female or immature bird perched and vocalizing at the edge of a large man-made pond, 13 March 1984, Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

### SHARP-SHINNED HAWK *Accipiter striatus*

P.W.W. saw one, 4 March 1984, 6 km west of El Rancho, Dpto. El Progreso. FRTAI.

### SHORT-TAILED HAWK *Buteo brachyurus*

Land (1970) gave the only record from Guatemala as the single specimen from "Cobán", Dpto. Alta Verapaz, reported by Salvin & Godman (1900). P.W.W. twice saw soaring individuals in excellent light and at close range. The first was at San Juan Chamelco, 5 km SSE of Cobán, Dpto. Alta Verapaz, 23 March 1982. The other was seen, 19 August 1984, along the Río Dulce,

between Fronteras and Livingston, Dpto. Izabal, soaring above mangroves in a manatee sanctuary (El Biotopo Chocón-Machacas para la Conservación del Manatí), the first record for the Caribbean lowland.

COLLARED PLOVER *Charadrius collaris*

Land (1962a) reported a single record from the arid interior, 23 August, Usumatlán, Dpto. Zacapa. P.W.W. saw 2 along the Motagua R.; one, 9 March 1984, at Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa; the other, 25 March 1984, at El Manzanal, Dpto. El Progreso.

SEMPALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus*

On 25 March 1984, P.W.W. found 2 along the Motagua R. at El Manzanal, Dpto. El Progreso. FRTAI.

NORTHERN JACANA *Jacana spinosa*

On 15 April 1984, at close range, P.W.W. saw an individual fly into a marshy field at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa melanoleuca*

One seen, 9 March 1984 (P.W.W.), along the Motagua R. at Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

ROYAL TERN *Sterna maxima*

Listed as a rare transient and winter visitor to Guatemala (Land 1970). From the bridge spanning the Río Dulce at Fronteras, Dpto. Izabal, P.W.W. saw 21 individuals on 16 August 1984 and 8 next day, all flying. Also on 17 August 1984, he saw c. 30 at the mouth of the Río Dulce, Livingston, Dpto. Izabal.

MOURNING DOVE *Zenaida macroura*

A transient and winter visitor to Guatemala (Land 1970), recorded from 20 October to 31 May. Near Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, P.W.W. observed it through the summer of 1984 in heavily grazed, dry scrub forest. On 3, 6, 11, 19, 23, 24, 26, and 29 June 1984, 1-5 were seen, and 3 on 31 July 1984.

RUDDY GROUND-DOVE *Columbina talpacoti*

Not reported in the tropical arid interior by Land (1970), but presently a common resident of towns and roadsides there; we have numerous records March–October 1984, from Santa Cruz and Teculután, Dpto. Zacapa, and El Manzanal, Dpto. El Progreso. FRTAI.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Land (1970) listed a single previous *summer* record from Guatemala: Dpto. Santa Rosa, 5 July 1963. On 2 June 1985, P.W.W. saw an adult in second-growth woodland at a wildlife sanctuary (El Biotopo Cerro Cahui para la Conservación del Pavo del Petén), north shore of Lago Petén Itzá, Dpto. Petén, the first record for this department. P.W.W. observed an adult in dry scrub forest at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, on 23 June 1984. FRTAI.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus americanus*

Listed as a transient, recorded in Guatemala, 5 September to 8 December, with no spring records (Land 1970). At Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, P.W.W. saw single birds 10 May and 19 June 1984, saw one and heard a second, both vocalizing, 26 July 1984, and heard another 31 July 1984. Single birds were seen, 22 and 25 May 1984, at El Manzanal, Dpto. El Progreso.



CHESTNUT-COLLARED SWIFT *Cypseloides niger*

One seen (P.W.W.), 21 May 1984, at close range (chestnut collar clearly visible), repeatedly, in a flock of swifts at a Quetzal sanctuary (El Biotopo Universitario para la Conservación del Quetzal), 5 km south of Purulhá, Baja Verapaz, the first record from the Verapaz highlands.

GREEN-BREASTED MANGO *Anthracoceros albirostris*

A single female seen by P.W.W., 8 and 10 March 1984, at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

BLACK-CRESTED COQUETTE *Lophornis helenae*

On 26 February 1984, P.W.W. observed an adult male at close range, both flying and perched, for c. 1 hr in "escobal" swamp forest on the road to Uaxactún, 4 km north of Tikal National Park headquarters (see map in Smithe & Paynter 1963), Dpto. Petén, the first record for Tikal National Park and for Dpto. Petén. He again saw an adult male at this site (photograph taken) on 27 February 1985.

RINGED KINGFISHER *Ceryle torquata*

Single birds seen 14 April, 27 May and 28 June 1984 along the Motagua R. near Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. On 11 and 15 July 1984, one was seen along the Motagua R. at the town Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

WEDGE-BILLED WOODCREEPER *Glyphorhynchus spirurus*

A single individual seen by P.W.W., 25 February 1984, at close range on the trunk of a tree within a forest on peaty soil, with hardwoods, palms, palmettos and rather thick undergrowth, 2 km SE of Tikal National Park headquarters, Dpto. Petén, the first record for the Park and for northern Dpto. Petén.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER *Contopus borealis*

Listed as a transient and possible winter visitor in Guatemala, 26 August to 16 December, and 7 March to 15 May (Land 1970). P.W.W. saw single birds on the lower northern slopes of Volcán del Agua, 8 km south of Antigua, Dpto. Sacatepéquez, 28 January and 7 February 1982, 15 February 1984, and 10 February 1985.

EASTERN KINGBIRD *Tyrannus tyrannus*

On 12 and 13 May 1984 groups of at least 6 birds were observed by P.W.W. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

MANGROVE SWALLOW *Tachycineta albilinea*

Dates observed by P.W.W. (numbers seen in parentheses): the town Río Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa – March 9(5) and 10(1), June 25(14), July 11(33, including 3 immatures) and 15(5), all 1984; Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa – May 13(2) and 24(1), June 5(4), 26(2), 29(1), July 9(5), 19(10), 24(10), 25(19), 26(3), 31(3), all 1984. The species clearly is resident in the tropical arid interior at this time. FRTAI.

BANK SWALLOW *Riparia riparia*

Listed as a rare transient in Guatemala, recorded from only 3 localities (Land 1970). P.W.W. saw 4 along the Motagua R. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, 12 May 1984; it was abundant there 13 May 1984. FRTAI.

CLIFF SWALLOW *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

Recorded in Guatemala only in autumn (Land 1970). P.W.W. found it numerous to abundant along the Motagua R. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, on 15 April and 12 and 13 May 1984.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Regarded as a transient and winter visitor, recorded in Guatemala September to April (Land 1970). On 8 and 12 May 1984 the species was numerous to abundant at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, and a single individual was seen there by P.W.W., 28 June 1984.

VEERY *Catharus fuscescens*

According to Land (1970), the only record from Guatemala was that of Smithe (1966), who recorded it between 16 September and 16 October 1962. P.W.W. saw 2 on 7 and 8 May 1982 at Tikal National Park, Dpto. Petén.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH *Catharus ustulatus*

A transient and winter visitor in Guatemala, rare in the Petén (Land 1970). P.W.W. observed one clearly, 15 April 1984, at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa (FRTAI), and found it abundant in Tikal National Park, Dpto. Petén, 8 and 9 May 1982.

BLUE-AND-WHITE MOCKINGBIRD *Melanotis hypoleucus*

Not recorded previously below 900 m in Guatemala (Land 1970). P.W.W. observed one individual in adult plumage at close range, 6 June 1984, in dry scrub forest at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa (elev. 219 m). FRTAI.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER *Vermivora chrysoptera*

P.W.W. observed a single male at Tikal National Park, Dpto. Petén, 25 February 1984, the first record for both the Park and Dpto. Petén.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER *Dendroica pensylvanica*

Listed as a transient and winter visitor, recorded in Guatemala 27 September to 23 March (Land 1970). Sightings of single birds by P.W.W. at Tikal National Park, Dpto. Petén, in 1982, extend records to 7 and 8 May.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER *Dendroica castanea*

The only previous definite record from Guatemala was that of Land (1963), who collected one specimen at Panzos, Alta Verapaz, 20 October 1958. P.W.W. observed 4 in Tikal National Park, Dpto. Petén, 7 May 1982, the first record from both the Park and Dpto. Petén.

SCRUB EUPHONIA *Euphonia affinis*

Seen by P.W.W. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa in trees on the grounds of a motel and in trees and shrubs along a small stream, 27, 28, 30 June, and 2, 9, 17-19, 24, 26, 30 July 1984; 2-4 in adult male plumage were seen on all but 2 of these dates; 1-5 in female or juvenile plumage were seen on all days. A bird believed to be a fledgling was seen begging to a female 17 July 1984, and on 30 July 1984 a moulting juvenile male was seen. FRTAI.

YELLOW-WINGED TANAGER *Thraupis abbas*

P.W.W. saw 2 adults with 2 juveniles in trees on the grounds of a motel in Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, 30 July 1984. FRTAI.

GRAYISH SALTATOR *Saltator coerulescens*

Seen by P.W.W. on the grounds of a motel, and in trees and shrubs along a small stream in Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa, 7 April, 26 and 27 June, and on 9, 16-19, 26, 31 July 1984; on all dates 1-2 adults and a possible juvenile were seen, except on 9 July, when a bird that clearly was a fledgling was observed. A nest containing nestlings was found, 16 July 1984, but on 17 July, the nest was absent. FRTAI.

BLACK-HEADED SALTATOR *Saltator atriceps*

On 30 July 1984, P.W.W. found one in tall trees bordering a large stream at Teculután, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

BLUE BUNTING *Cyanocompsa parellina*

On 15 April 1984, P.W.W. observed an adult pair near the Motagua R. at Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa. FRTAI.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW *Melospiza lincolnii*

P.W.W. saw single birds on 14, 16, 23, 24 and 29 March 1982 at San Juan Chamelco, Dpto. Alta Verapaz, the first records from this department.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD *Agelaius phoeniceus*

P.W.W. saw 1-2 adult males displaying and singing in a marshy field near a large man-made pond, 7 and 15 April and 18 and 31 July 1984, Santa Cruz, Dpto. Zacapa; on 17 July 1984, he found 2 singing and displaying adult males and 2 females (or immatures) there. On 3 June 1984, he saw an adult male in dry scrub forest nearby. FRTAI.

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